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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR"

All the Year Round

a
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

PART 72.

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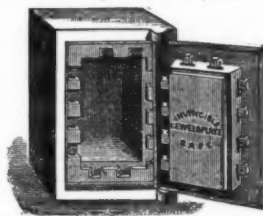
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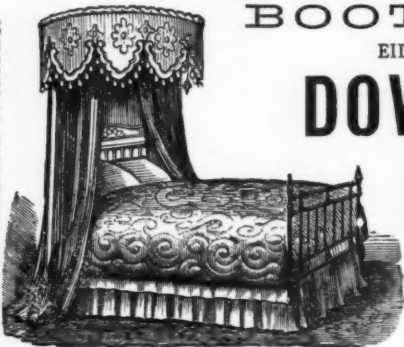
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No. 310. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1874.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A SILENT WITNESS.

BY EDMUND YATES.

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "CASTAWAY," "THE YELLOW FLAG," &c. &c.

CHAPTER IV. SPIDERS AND A FLY.

CAPTAIN STUDLEY smiled upon his daughter, and greeted her with a friendly hand-pressure. He did not treat her to a paternal kiss, because he had a special horror of making himself ridiculous, and there were plenty of people looking on who, as he flattered himself, would not guess the exact relationship between himself and Anne, and might put a false construction on the embrace. He was, as Anne had described him, a handsome man of about fifty-five, with keen black eyes and hawk-like profile, a partially bald head fringed with carefully-arranged grey hair, grizzled whiskers and moustache. His clothes were quiet in colour and well-made, though with something sporting in their cut; the grey trousers rather tight to the leg, the long scarf with the plain gold horseshoe pin, the cutaway coat with the pockets at the side, and the white hat with a black band. At the same time it must be allowed that the style was purely sporting, and not in the least slangy. Some of Captain Studley's friends were in the habit of saying that he "looked like a duke;" to which he would reply that he would not mind being one, and that he would undertake to "show more fun for the money" than many of those who now held the position. In society he could assume very pleasant manners and pass for being a frank convivial creature, but by nature he was rather reticent and reserved. Now, at the very moment of meeting him, Anne could not make up

her mind whether or not her father had observed her interchange of salutation with Mr. Danby; he had said nothing about it, but that, with Captain Studley, by no means was to be taken as a reason for his not having been cognizant of the entire proceeding.

"You are decidedly improved, Anne," said the captain, eyeing his daughter with the glance of a connoisseur, as she sat opposite to him in the railway carriage of which they were the sole occupants. "You have become set and womanly. There was a tendency to gangling about you when we last met, which was rather terrible, but it is always so with girls at that age, I believe. I suppose you are glad to have left school?"

"I scarcely know; I have not yet realised the feeling sufficiently to judge whether I am glad or sorry," said Anne.

"Exactly," said the captain. "You will have some regret about parting with your school friends, that is natural enough. There's Miss Middleham, for instance."

"Yes," said Anne. "Was not that a dreadful thing about her uncle?"

"About her uncle?" repeated the captain, looking hard at his daughter. "Oh, yes, to be sure—that was a dreadful thing. Not very bad for her though, as she could not have cared much about him, and comes into all the money, I'm told. By the way, that reminds me. I wrote to you that you must give up all communication and correspondence with Miss Middleham. Did you think that odd on my part?"

"I thought you must have had some special reason for issuing those orders," said Anne. "I did not attempt to guess what the reasons were."

"Exactly, that was quite right! 'Their's

not to reason why,' as Tennyson says. I read that poem, the 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' at some penny readings which they got up last winter at Loddonford, with great success," said the captain, lifting his hat, and jauntily pushing his hands through his hair.

"Loddonford! is that where our home is. Are we going there now?" cried Anne, suddenly remembering what Grace had said.

"I don't know about our home," said the captain. "Loddonford is where I have a cottage for the present, and where we are going now; but I don't imagine it will be much of a home for you. And that brings me back to what I was saying. Miss Middleham is an heiress, and, as such, a very unfit companion for you who have got your own bread to earn. She would naturally fill your head with all kinds of foolish notions, and, equally naturally, you would be very jealous of her position, and think that you were very much to be pitied. That would not do at all. Indeed, if she had been coming down here, instead of going to Germany, I should not have had you with me at all, but should have found some place for you as governess, and sent you straight off there."

"Oh, I am to be a governess then!" said Anne, quietly.

"Most certainly you are," said the captain. "You didn't think I was giving you such an education as you've had, in order that you might tom-fool upon the stage? That's the only other way for a girl to make money, that I ever heard of. Governess, companion; that kind of thing. You know what I mean."

Yes, Anne knew what he meant, she said. It was coming out exactly as she had anticipated, exactly as she had told Grace. Life, in all its harsh stern reality was about to commence for her at once. She was not disappointed, though she had hoped for some little interval. After all, it might be for the best.

"By the way, how did you know young Danby?" asked the captain, looking hard at her again. "I saw him bow to you just now at the station, didn't I?"

"Very likely," said Anne, struggling to keep down her rising colour; "he is a clerk in Middleham's bank."

"Thanks, very much," said the captain, with a pleasant smile; "so far the court is with you. I knew that already. What I want to know is, how you became acquainted with him."

"Mr. Danby has been up once or twice to Hampstead with messages for Grace Middleham from Mr. Heath and the lawyers," said Anne. "Grace Middleham introduced him to me."

"I see," said the captain, "I see. He is a pleasant young man, but rather too fast for one in his position. However, he comes down to stay with me at this place now and then, and, by force of example and that kind of thing, he will soon get over that."

Mr. Danby fast! Mr. Danby staying at Loddonford! Anne almost doubted the evidence of her ears. Why had he never spoken to her of his intimacy with her father? He must have known who she was, and such conduct was strange, to say the least of it. While she was thinking thus, the speed of the train began to diminish, and her father suggested that she should get her "traps" together, as they were approaching their destination.

"The young lady's box is in the forward van, Mark," said the captain to the porter, who appeared, touching his hat, at the carriage door; "bring it to Banks's fly, please. Now, come with me, Anne. Good day, Banks," this to the flyman, "the porter is bringing my daughter's box, and then you shall drive us home, please."

"It's as well to be civil to the people down here, and I'm quite popular," the captain remarked when they had started, "as I told you I helped them in their penny readings, and I might have been vicar's churchwarden, only I'm called away so often."

"Have you had this house a long time?" asked Anne, breaking her usual rule of reticence.

"It isn't a house, it's a mere cottage," said the captain; "I've had it for about two years; though, of course, I've not been here all the time. The place has its advantages; it is too far from town to be a Sunday resort for cockneys, whom I hate; it is very quiet, and the people are simple and primitive. Besides, there is nobody here to gossip. With the exception of Mr. Middleham's—you can see the lodge-gate down in that hollow—there is not a house of any pretension in the place."

Their drive lasted for a quarter of an hour, but Anne did not speak again, occupying herself in looking about her. The road between the station and the village was sufficiently uninteresting, straight and flat, with corn-fields—at that season vast billowy seas of golden grain—on either side.

As they approached the village, Anne here and there caught distant glimpses of the shining river, and the village itself could scarcely have been quainter or more picturesque. Not a hundred houses in all, a few low-ceilinged gable-roofed shops, a few two-roomed thatched cottages, mostly ivy-covered, where dwelt the farm-labourers, the fishermen, and others for whom the river furnished miscellaneous employment; the old square-towered church standing in the midst of its peaceful grave-yard; the parsonage, with a bevy of the parson's daughters just returning from a boating expedition; the doctor's red-faced house with a flaming brass-plate on its door; a farm-house or two standing back in the midst of their outbuildings, with patient kine collected in the straw-yard, and vigilant watch-dogs which barked at the passing vehicle. Then another long stretch of field-bordered road, and the fly stopped at a door in a low brick wall overhung with ivy.

"This is the place," said the captain, descending, and opening the door with a key. "Come in, Anne. The man will bring your box. What are you looking at?" he added sharply. "The garden might be better kept, certainly."

What was she looking at? At the abomination of desolation, she thought. So far as she could see, a vast tangled jungle, in which the weeds and flowers, inextricably mixed together, were growing at their own will in riotous profusion. In the background stood a low, square, white cottage, streaked and discoloured by damp, while the air was filled with a thin, chill vapour, the exhalation from a large round pond which stood in the midst of the so-called garden, and which had evidently once been considered a feature of the place, as a little rustic bridge—broken down now, and with its tattered bark casing fluttering mournfully—had been thrown across it. As Anne made her way up the path, which was half choked with weeds, a spider's web floated across her face, and two or three large toads, disturbed in their conference, scuttled into the bushes.

"I'll just show you the house," said the captain, who followed her closely. "It's rather a Robinson Crusoe kind of place; but you might get it into something like order while you are here."

A small flight of stone steps, with a sculptured balustrade and a ghastly funereal urn on either side, led to the

hall door, on which the damp stood in beads, like an unwholesome perspiration. This door was swollen, and made much stubborn resistance to the captain's wrathful efforts to push it open. When he had succeeded, he passed through the little hall, and, opening a door immediately on his left, called to Anne to come to him. She found herself in a square, low-ceilinged room, fitted with shelves, on one or two of which were a little glass and china, and large cupboards or presses. The window, which was only a few feet from the ground, looked on to the garden; and opposite the door by which they had entered was another door, half-glazed, but with the glass portion covered with a ragged red curtain.

"You see, the people who were here before evidently used this place as a sort of store-room," said the captain, looking round. "That door leads into the dining-room, so it would be handy for the pickles and those kind of things. I was thinking you might have in some things, and put it in order. The servant I have is worse than useless. She never thinks of anything."

"Yes," said Anne, trying to smile, though the dreariness of the place seemed to have struck to her heart. "I do not know much about those matters, but I have no doubt it would come in time. I had no idea you were settled anywhere for a permanence, papa; but as it is so, if I succeed, you might let me stop here as your housekeeper." When Grace attained her majority she would come back to Loddonford, Anne thought, and to remain there would be her one chance of seeing her.

"Eh!" said the captain; "stop here! I don't think that would do. I am liable to be called out by business engagements at a moment's notice, and never know how long I may have to stay away. Besides, the arrangements here are settled in regular bachelor fashion, and a young woman might find herself out of place. No, I think you must go for a governess, as I said."

They passed through the glass door into the dining-room, reeking of stale tobacco, the fumes of which hung about the stuff curtains, and furnished with an old Turkey carpet, here and there worn into dangerous stringy pitfalls, and a few ricketty horse-hair chairs; thence up-stairs to the room immediately above, which was to be Anne's bedroom, and which, though poorly furnished, looked

cleaner than any other part of the house she had seen. Here her father left her, and so soon as the door was closed behind him, Anne lay her arms upon the chimney-piece, and, burying her head between them, burst into a great fit of crying.

It was a foolish thing to do, as practically it could have no beneficial result; but, though strong-minded, she was but a girl after all, and had not seen enough of the world's ways as yet to take hard blows with a smiling face. Moreover, she was wretched at having to part from her friend, tired with her journey, and half dazed with the utter misery of the place in which she found herself. Hitherto, when she had met her father, she had seen him at an hotel, which was smart and fresh, and bright with life. When he had mentioned having a "cottage," Anne's fancy had depicted a little retreat on the Birket Foster model, with swallows twittering on the thatched roof, and roses clustering round the pretty porch; and the shock on discovering the reality was too much for her. Her father's manner, too, seemed altered. Formerly he had been stern and short in speech, but now there seemed to be about him a heartlessness—as evidenced in his determination to rid himself of her at the earliest opportunity—which she had never before noticed. This in itself would have induced her to do her best to meet his wishes by seeking some situation; and, as she looked round the dreary room, and saw through the window the tangled wilderness enclosed in crumbling walls and brooded over by the clinging vapour, she felt thankful that her father had refused her petition for permission to stay there.

On the second evening after her arrival, Anne was sitting alone in the dull dining-room, which she had brightened by the introduction here and there of a few flowers, and made look more habitable by a different arrangement of the furniture and by the never-failing magic of a woman's touch, when the gate bell rang, and, looking up, she saw two gentlemen alighting from a fly. In an instant she recognised Mr. Heath and Mr. Danby, and as her eyes fell on the latter, for the first time since she left Hampstead, she felt that life was not so wholly wretched as she had found it during the last few days, and that there was some one who took interest in her existence. Walter Danby had never said as much, and yet she knew it, as well as if he had spoken in the plainest language,

saw it that instant in the bright flush which mounted into his cheeks, and the glad look which shone in his eyes, as he perceived her at the window. The next minute he was in the room, and by her side.

"You did not think we should meet again so soon, Miss Studley," he said, in a cheery voice and with a frank smile, "and I dared hardly hope it."

"You must have had much clearer ideas on the subject than I could possibly have," said Anne, with something of pique in her tone. "Why did you not tell me that you knew my father? that you were in the habit of visiting him?"

"I did not mention my acquaintance with Captain Studley," said Mr. Danby, looking a little uncomfortable, "because I thought that he would have informed you of it himself, if he had desired you to know it. Besides, I was not certain that you were coming here, or that I should have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"I never was more astonished than when I recognised you at the gate," said Anne. "That is Mr. Heath with you, is it not?"

"Yes," replied Danby; "he has gone up to the captain's den; he has some business to talk over, he said, and did not want my company. You may judge how sorry I was to be able to have a few minutes with you. And so you were surprised to see me! You did not know I was a friend of your father's?"

"Oh yes, he had mentioned your name to me; he saw you that day at the station, but somehow I never thought you would come while I was here."

"And may I ask what Captain Studley said of me?" asked Danby looking rather nervous, "nothing very bad, I hope—only—only he has not seen me under quite the best circumstances. Of course, when I first made his acquaintance, I had no notion I should ever see you, or—or it might have been different."

"Oh no, he said nothing very bad of you," said Anne, trying to smile, "nothing indeed of any consequence, only just alluded to having seen you at Paddington."

The subject was uncomfortable to her, and she was glad to change it, so after a minute she said, "You will be able to make but a flying visit, I'm afraid, the last train to town leaves very early, does it not?"

"Oh, we're not going back to-night," said Danby, "we've engaged beds at the inn. We always do that when we come

down here, because we have—that is to say, Heath and the captain have business which keeps them up very late.”

“It must be very dull for you, having to sit by while they are engaged, said Anne.

“How do you amuse yourself?”

“Oh no, not dull, I generally take a hand—I mean a share in—in what they are doing. It—it helps to pass the time, you know.”

“Yes, of course,” said Anne, who was wondering to herself what induced him to take the journey, for the mere purpose of sitting by while her father and Heath were engaged in their business. At this moment the captain’s door was heard to close and the next he made his appearance in the room.

“Good evening, Danby,” he said, advancing and shaking hands, “my daughter, I find, you know already, though you did not expect to find her here. She’s only making a short stay, for this is scarcely the place for a young lady. Anne, tell the servant to take some candles into my little study, my den, as I call it. Mr. Heath is there and will be engaged for some little time in accounts and that sort of thing. And when you’ve done that you can go to your own room, please. Mr. Danby and I have some important business to transact, and we will remain here.”

“Very well, papa,” said Anne. “Shall I see you again?”

“I think not,” said the captain. “We may be detained late, long after the hour when it is advisable you should be in bed. You had better say good-night to Mr. Danby, Anne.”

“Good-night, and good-bye, Miss Studley,” said Danby, venturing to press the hand which she extended to him, “for we shall have started in the morning long before you are visible, I imagine.”

“Oh yes, long before,” said the captain. “Good-night, Anne. Mind Mr. Heath has two candles, at once.” And, as Anne left the room, her father carefully closed the door after her.

“Now, my young friend,” he continued, when they were alone, “mix yourself a glass of grog, and let us sit down quietly to our tournament. Women are all very well, but they are sometimes very much in the way. Ah, you don’t think so now, of course, but you will when you come to my age. That girl of mine, she must go as soon as I can find a proper place to send her to. However, that does not interest you. Just

help me to wheel this table under the lamp. So. And you will find the cards in the drawer of the sideboard behind you. Here is the key; I keep it locked now my daughter’s at home, for all women are afflicted with curiosity. They can’t help it; it is natural to them. And it is as well to give them as little as possible to find out.”

“Do you mind my setting light to the fire, Captain Studley?” asked Danby.

“I see it is already laid; and this room strikes me as chilly.”

“By all means,” said the captain. “You will find matches on the chimney-piece. It’s the damp from that infernal pond. If I were likely to stop here any time, I’d have it drained. But I’m a bird of passage, and it would be useless to spend money on any part of this place.—Talking of money, how do we stand?”

“I am afraid I am forty pounds in your debt,” said Danby, with flushed cheeks. “I had a run of ill luck when we last played.”

“Exactly; that is the precise sum,” said the captain, who had referred to some memoranda in his pocket-book. “Well, to-night luck will change, very likely. Fortune rarely favours me twice in succession. Shall we play three games for double or quits?”

Danby hesitated for a moment. The amount of the stake proposed would, if he lost, be of serious import to him. But he was ashamed to confess it, and, at the same time, he had an odd kind of notion that he would conciliate Captain Studley in order to get opportunities of seeing Anne. So he consented, and they sat down to *ecarté*.

A curious sight for a physiognomist and character-student. The rays of the shaded swinging lamp falling on the two players—on the chestnut curls and bright eager face of the boy, leaning forward and hurriedly assorting his cards; on the sparse, grey locks and keen, though composed look of his companion, reckoning his hand at a glance, and perfectly conscious of his own strength. A tumbler of brandy-and-water stood at Danby’s side, from which during each deal he would hurriedly sip; but the captain rarely touched stimulants, and never when he had any business on hand. Steadily they played on into the night, rarely speaking save in the jargon of the game, or when at the end of each they agreed upon the state of the account. This was much

against Danby. Fortune seemed far more faithless to him even than she had been on the previous occasion. He had little skill as compared with his adversary, and such as he had he threw away after a few games, when he found he was losing, playing recklessly and staking wildly.

All this time the captain, who was as calm and self-possessed as when he first sat down, had been making occasional memoranda in his pocket-book, and meeting his companion's wild demands that the stakes should be increased with faint protests, which were never renewed. Danby's tumbler had been thrice replenished, and his manner had become more and more nervous and excited, when as, at the close of a game, the captain was completing an entry and Danby was shuffling the cards for a fresh deal, the clock struck two.

"Hallo!" said Studley, as the chimes fell upon his ear; "I had no notion it was so late! No more play to-night, Danby. You've lost heavily enough for once, and must knock off for a little time. No man could stand up against such a run of misfortune. Have you any notion how much you owe me now?"

"I don't know, exactly," said Danby, pushing his hair from off his forehead. "A good deal, I'm afraid! I didn't keep any account of it towards the last."

"There's the statement," said the captain, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book and handing it across the table. "One hundred and fifty-three pounds, exactly."

"Good God! is it as much as that?" cried Danby, with horror in his face. "It can't be—I mean to say I had no idea I had lost so much."

"There it is in detail," said the captain, "and you can judge for yourself. I didn't know what it was myself, until I totted it up; but I knew it was running on."

"Won't you—won't you give me my revenge?" said the young man, feebly; for he was almost stunned by the announcement.

"I'll give you anything you like, my good fellow," said Studley; "but not now, and not, indeed, until you have squared up this account. You see we began to-night with your owing me forty pounds, and that was against all rules, which stipulate for payment at the time of play."

"I will pay you. I had no intention of attempting to shirk payment. I will pay you, indeed." He stood with one hand leaning on the table, the other clasped to his head, endeavouring to collect his senses.

"Of course you will, my dear Danby; I never imagined differently for an instant, but when? The money would be particularly handy just now, for I have my daughter's school bills to settle, and one or two other affairs to meet; and the truth is, I'm confoundedly short."

"I—I can't pay just yet—I mean for a day or two," said Danby. "I must realise some money which belongs to me, and which I had set apart for something else."

"Ex-actly," said the captain, "which you had set apart for something else, not anticipating any such contingency as has arisen! Well, a day or two would not matter, but it must not be a week or two, because, as I tell you, I want the money."

"You would like me to name a day for the payment. Would Sunday next suit you? It is an odd day to fix upon, you may think, but it is the only one which I have free, and I should like to bring the money down here myself," said Danby, with the secret hope that, after he had finished his business with the captain, he might be able to get a few words with Anne.

"Sunday will do very well, 'the better day the better deed,' as they say, and a better deed than the payment of money to a person who wants it as much as I do, could not well be!" said the captain. "Let us say Sunday then, at three o'clock. That will give you ample time to get down here—for I suppose you lie late on the Sunday morning, take it easy after that regular week-day grind, eh? and then perhaps you will stop to dinner, and if you're bent on having your revenge, you might win all your money back the same night. Now, I think I'll be off to bed."

"And I too, for I feel thoroughly tired out," said Danby. "By-the-bye, shall I tell Heath how late it is?"

"No. I don't think I would disturb him! He has had some intricate calculations to work out in the business which he is arranging for me, and said he might possibly be very late. I don't think the people at the inn need sit up for him. He will probably take a shake-down here! Good night!"

The noise made by the opening of the street door roused Anne to a complete state of wakefulness. She had been conscious, in the semi-slumber into which she had fallen on first seeking her bed, of the rumble of voices in the room beneath her. But this was a soothing sound, and she

gradually fell off into a half doze, in which she was suffering under a very jumbled version of those affairs of her life which most interested her at the time, and from which she was aroused by the noise of the scuffling of feet in the hall, and the scraping of the bolts as they were withdrawn from their sockets. Startled, and at first scarce able to recollect where she was, she sat up in her bed and listened. The rumble of voices was renewed, then the door was opened, as she knew by the gust of wind that came sweeping through the house, then shut with a clang. And then came a wailing sound, which Anne recognised as Walter Danby's voice, which uttered the words, "O, my God!" in deep remorseful tones, and was heard no more.

Meanwhile Captain Studley, extinguishing the lamp in the dining-room after lighting a fresh cigar, and brewing the first glass of grog which he had tasted that evening, made his way to his "den," where he found Heath seated at the writing table, with a pile of papers in front of him.

"At it still?" cried the captain, who was remarkably cheerful after his winnings, "when are you going to knock off? How does it come out?"

"I've finished!" said Heath, pushing the papers away, and tilting his chair back—"and it comes out better than I thought for. If Van Stuyvesant gives the price—the lowest price I have reckoned—we shall be better by several hundred pounds than I had anticipated. Where's young Danby?"

"Gone to the Lion," said the captain. "I told him you did not want to be disturbed. Besides he was rather upset, and would not have been good company."

"What was the matter?" asked Heath.

"Were you two playing, as usual?"

"Yes, we've been at *carté* almost since I left you, and I have had a wonderful run of luck," said the captain.

"You call it luck," said Heath, with a scornful smile; "I wonder what Danby would call it if he knew all."

"It strikes me that he knows quite enough," said the captain. "I never turned the king, without finding that young man's eyes fixed on me in a very suspicious manner. Once or twice he looked very black indeed, and I thought he would have spoken, but he didn't."

"He is evidently on the *qui vive*," said

Heath. "When I first proposed to him to come down with me to-day—it was some days ago—he refused, but afterwards came up and asked me to bring him."

"That was because he had seen Anne in the meantime. He met her at Hampstead, and was hanging about the Paddington station when I met her there. I saw him."

"Poor young fool!" said Heath, gathering up his papers, and sweeping them into a drawer which he carefully locked, handing the key to Studley. "How much have you won?"

"One hundred and fifty three pounds, to a sixpence," said the captain, referring to the memorandum book.

"He will have to draw on that five hundred legacy from his uncle, which he had invested as a nest-egg," said Heath, with a grim smile. "Poor devil! he intended to keep that until he was married!"

"There'll be a good bit of it left, unless he takes his revenge on Sunday, when he is going to bring the money."

"To bring the money! Why doesn't he send it?" asked Heath.

"You have forgotten you were ever young, I think, George," said the captain, shaking his head. "Would you have sent anything that you could have brought ten years ago, when there was a pretty girl in the case?"

"I forgot that," said Heath. "Sunday, eh! Well, he can have plenty of time with Miss Studley after he's finished with you, for I shall want a good deal of your attention myself, that day."

"Right," said the captain; "but I don't care about those young people being thrown too much together. If my daughter is to marry, she must fly at higher game than young Danby. So that I'll send Anne to spend that Sunday afternoon with Mrs. Wells, at the Weir, who has often expressed a wish to see her!"

THE LICENSER OF PLAYHOUSES.

THE Act of 1737 for licensing plays, play-houses, and players, and legalising the power the Lord Chamberlain had long been accustomed to exercise, although readily passed by both Houses of Parliament, gave great offence to the public. The Abbé Le Blanc, who was visiting England at this period, describes the new law as provoking an "universal murmur in the nation." It was openly complained of in the newspapers; at the coffee-houses

it was denounced as unjust and "contrary to the liberties of the people of England." Fear prevailed that the freedom of the press would next be invaded. In the House of Lords Chesterfield had stigmatised the measure both as an encroachment on liberty and an attack on property. "Wit, my lords," he said, "is a sort of property. It is the property of those that have it, and too often the only property they have to depend on. It is, indeed, but a precarious dependence. Thank God! we, my lords, have a dependence of another kind; we have a much less precarious support, and, therefore, cannot feel the inconveniences of the bill now before us; but it is our duty to encourage and protect wit, whosoever's property it may be. . . . I must own I cannot easily agree to the laying of a tax upon wit; but by this bill it is to be heavily taxed—it is to be excised; for if this bill passes, it cannot be retailed in a proper way without a permit; and the Lord Chamberlain is to have the honour of being chief gauger, supervisor, commissioner, judge and jury." At this time, however, it is to be noted that parliamentary reporting was forbidden by both Houses. The general public, therefore, knew little of Lord Chesterfield's eloquent defence of the liberty of the stage.

The Act was passed in June, when the patent theatres, according to custom, were closed for the summer. Some two months after their re-opening in the autumn all dramatic representations were suspended for six weeks, in consequence of the death of Queen Caroline. In January was presented at Covent Garden "A Nest of Plays," as the author, one Hildebrand Jacob, described his production; a combination of three short plays, each consisting of one act only, entitled, respectively, *The Prodigal Reformed*, *Happy Constancy*, and *The Trial of Conjugal Love*. The performance met with a very unfavourable reception. The author attributed the ill success of his work to its being the first play licensed by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain under the new bill, many spectators having pre-determined to silence, under any circumstances, "the first fruits of that Act of Parliament." And this seems, indeed, to have been the case. The Abbé Le Blanc, who was present on the occasion, writes: "The best play in the world would not have succeeded that night. There was a disposition to damn whatever might appear. The farce in question was damned, indeed, without the least compassion. Nor was

that all, for the actors were driven off the stage, and happy was it for the author that he did not fall into the hands of this furious assembly." And the Abbé proceeds to explain that the originators of this disturbance were not "schoolboys, apprentices, clerks, or mechanics;" but lawyers, "a body of gentlemen perhaps less honoured but certainly more feared here than they are in France," who, "from living in colleges (Inns of Court), and from conversing always with one another, mutually preserve a spirit of independency through the body, and with great ease form cabals." . . . "At Paris the cabals of the pit are only among young fellows, whose years may excuse their folly, or persons of the meanest education and stamp; here they are the fruit of deliberation in a very grave body of people who are not less formidable to the minister in place than to the theatrical writers." But the Abbé relates that on a subsequent occasion, when, another new play having been announced, he had looked for further disturbance, the judicious dramatist of the night succeeded in calming the pit by administering in his prologue a double dose of incense to their vanity. "Half an hour before the play was to begin the spectators gave notice of their dispositions by frightful hisses and outcries, equal, perhaps, to what were ever heard at a Roman amphitheatre." The author, however, having in part tamed this wild audience by his flattery, secured ultimately its absolute favour by humouring its prejudices after the grossest fashion. He brought upon the stage a figure "with black eyebrows, a ribbon of an ell long under his chin, a bag-peruke immoderately powdered, and his nose all bedaubed with snuff. What Englishman could not know a Frenchman by this ridiculous figure?" The Frenchman was presently shown to be, for all the lace down every seam of his coat, nothing but a cook, and then followed severest satire and criticism upon the manners and customs of France. "The excellence and virtues of English beef were extolled, and the author maintained that it was owing to the qualities of its juice that the English were so courageous and had such a solidity of understanding, which raised them above all the nations in Europe; he preferred the noble old English pudding beyond all the finest ragouts that ever were invented by the greatest geniuses that France ever produced." These "ingenious strokes" were loudly applauded by the audience, it seems, who in their delight at the abuse lavished upon the French, forgot

that they came to condemn the play and to uphold the ancient liberties of the stage. From that time forward, the Abbé states, "the law was executed without the least trouble; all the plays since have been quietly heard, and either succeeded or not according to their merits.

When Garrick visited Paris he declined to be introduced to the Abbé Le Blanc, "on account of the irreverence with which he had treated Shakespeare." There can, indeed, be no doubt that the Abbé, although he wrote amusing letters, was a very prejudiced person, and his evidence and opinions touching the English stage must be received with caution. So far as can be ascertained, especially by study of the *History of the Stage* (compiled by that industrious clergyman, Mr. Geneste, from the playbills in the British Museum), but few new plays were produced in the course of the season immediately following the passing of the Licensing Act; certainly no new play can be found answering the description furnished by the Abbé with due regard to the period he has fixed for its production. Possibly he referred to the *Beaux' Stratagem*, in which appear a French officer and an Irish-French priest, and which was certainly represented some few nights after the condemnation of Mr. Jacob's *Nest of Plays*. Farquhar's comedy was then thirty years old, however. Nor has the Abbé done full justice to the public opposition offered to the Licensing Act. At the Haymarket Theatre a serious riot occurred in October, 1738, fifteen months after the passing of the measure. Closed against English actors the theatre was opened by a French company, armed with a license from the Lord Chamberlain. A comedy, called *L'Embarras de Richesses*, was announced for representation "by authority." The house was crowded immediately after the opening of the doors. But the audience soon gave evidence of their sentiments by singing in chorus the *Roast Beef of Old England*. Then followed loud huzzas and general tumult. Deveil, one of the Justices of the Peace for Westminster, who was present, declared the proceedings to be riotous, and announced his intention to maintain the King's authority. He stated, further, that it was the King's command that the play should be acted, and that all offenders would be immediately secured by the guards in waiting. In opposition to the magistrate it was maintained "that the audience had a legal right to show their dislike to any

play or actor; that the judicature of the pit had been acquiesced in, time immemorial; and as the present set of actors were to take their fate from the public, they were free to receive them as they pleased."

When the curtain drew up the actors were discovered standing between two files of grenadiers, with their bayonets fixed and resting on their firelocks. This seeming endeavour to secure the success of French acting by the aid of British bayonets still more infuriated the audience. Even Justice Deveil thought it prudent to order the withdrawal of the military. The actors attempted to speak, but their voices were overborne by hisses, groans, and "not only catcalls, but all the various portable instruments that could make a disagreeable noise." A dance was next essayed; but even this had been provided against: showers of peas descended upon the stage, and "made capering very unsafe." The French and Spanish Ambassadors, with their ladies, who had occupied the stage-box, now withdrew, only to be insulted outside the theatre by the mob, who had cut the traces of their carriages. The curtain at last fell, and the attempt to present French plays at the Haymarket was abandoned, "the public being justly indignant that whilst an arbitrary act suppressed native talent, foreign adventurers should be patronised and encouraged." It must be said, however, that the French actors suffered for sins not their own, and that the wrath of the public did not really reach the Lord Chamberlain or effect any change in the Licensing Act.

For twenty years the Haymarket remained without a license of any endurance. The theatre was occasionally opened, however, for brief seasons, by special permission of the Chamberlain or in defiance of his authority, many ingenious subterfuges being resorted to, so that the penalties imposed by the Act might be evaded. One of the advertisements ran—"At Cibber's Academy, in the Haymarket, will be a concert, after which will be exhibited (gratis) a rehearsal, in form of a play, called *Romeo and Juliet*." Macklin, the actor, opened the theatre in 1744, and, under the pretence of instructing "unfledged performers" in "the science of acting," gave a variety of dramatic representations. It was expressly announced that no money would be taken at the doors, "nor any person admitted but by printed tickets, which will be delivered by

Mr. Macklin, at his house in Bow Street, Covent Garden." At one of these performances Samuel Foote made his first appearance upon the stage, sustaining the part of Othello. Presently, Foote ventured to give upon the stage of the Haymarket, a monologue entertainment, called "Diversions of a Morning." At the instance of Lacy, however, one of the patentees of Drury Lane Theatre, whom Foote had satirised, the performance was soon prohibited. But Foote was not easily discouraged; and, by dint of wit and impudence, for some time baffled the authorities. He invited his friends to attend the theatre, at noon, and "drink a dish of chocolate with him." He promised that he would "endeavour to make the morning as diverting as possible;" and notified that "Sir Dilbury Diddle would be there, and Lady Betty Frisk has absolutely promised." Tickets, without which no person would be admitted, were to be obtained at George's Coffee House, Temple Bar. Some simple visitors, no doubt, expected that chocolate would really be served to them. But the majority were content with an announcement from the stage that, while chocolate was preparing, Mr. Foote would, with the permission of his friends, proceed with his instruction of certain pupils he was educating in the art of acting. Under this pretence a dramatic representation was really given, and repeated on some forty occasions. Then he grew bolder, and opened the theatre in the evening, at the request, as he stated, "of several persons who are desirous of spending an hour with Mr. Foote, but find the time inconvenient." Instead of chocolate in the morning, Mr. Foote's friends were therefore invited to drink "a dish of tea" with him at half-past six in the evening. By-and-by, his entertainment was slightly varied, and described as an Auction of Pictures. Eventually, Foote obtained from the Duke of Devonshire, the Lord Chamberlain, a permanent license for the theatre, and the Haymarket took rank as a regular and legal place of entertainment, to be open, however, only during the summer months. Upon Foote's decease, the theatre devolved upon George Colman, who obtained a continuance of the license.

The theatre in Goodman's-fields underwent experiences very similar to those of the Haymarket. Under the provisions of the Licensing Act its performances became liable to the charge of illegality. It was without a patent or a license. It was kept

open professedly for concerts of vocal and instrumental music divided into two parts. Between these parts dramatic performances were presented gratis. The obscurity of the theatre, combined with its remote position, probably protected it for some time from interference and suppression. But on the 19th October, 1741, at this unlicensed theatre, a gentleman, who, as the playbill of the night untruly stated, had never before appeared on any stage, undertook the part of Richard the Third in Cibber's version of Shakespeare's tragedy. The gentleman's name was David Garrick. Had he failed the theatre might have lived on. But his success was fatal to it. The public went in crowds from all parts of the town to see the new actor. "From the polite ends of Westminster the most elegant company flocked to Goodman's-fields, insomuch that from Temple Bar the whole way was covered with a string of coaches." The patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden interfered, "alarmed at the deficiency of their own receipts," and invoked the aid of the Lord Chamberlain. The Goodman's Fields Theatre was closed, and Garrick was spirited away to Drury Lane, with a salary of six hundred guineas a year, a larger sum than had ever before been awarded to any performer.

It will be seen that the Chamberlain had deemed it his mission to limit, as much as possible, the number of places of theatrical entertainment in London. Playgoers were bidden to be content with Drury Lane and Covent Garden; it was not conceivable to the noblemen and commoners occupying the Houses of Parliament, or to the place-holders in the Chamberlain's office, or in the Royal household, that other theatres could possibly be required.

Still attempts were occasionally made to establish additional places of entertainment. In 1785, John Palmer, the actor, famous as the original Joseph Surface, laid the first stone of a new theatre, to be called The East London, or Royalty, in the neighbourhood of the old Goodman's Fields Theatre, which had been many years abandoned of the actors and converted into a goods-warehouse. The building was completed in 1787. The opening representation was announced; when the proprietors of the patent theatres gave warning that any infringement of their privileges would be followed by the prosecution of Mr. Palmer and his company. The performances took

place, nevertheless, but they were stated to be for the benefit of the London Hospital, and not, therefore, for "hire, gain, or reward;" so the actors avoided risk of commitment as rogues and vagabonds. But necessarily the enterprise ended in disaster. Palmer, his friends alleged, lost his whole fortune; it was shrewdly suspected, however, that he had, in truth, no fortune to lose. In any case he speedily retired from the new theatre. It was open for brief seasons with such exhibitions of music, dancing, and pantomime, as were held to be unaffected by the Act, and permissible under the license of the local magistrates. From time to time, however, the relentless patentees took proceedings against the actors. Delpini, the clown, was even committed to prison for exclaiming "Roast Beef" in a Christmas pantomime. By uttering words without the accompaniment of music he had, it appeared, constituted himself an actor of a stage play.

Some five-and-twenty years later, Elliston was now memorialising the King, now petitioning the House of Commons and the Privy Council, in reference to the opening of an additional theatre. He had been in treaty for the Pantheon, in Oxford Street, and urged that "the intellectual community would be benefited by an extension of license for the regular drama." As lessee of the Royal Circus or Surrey Theatre, he besought liberty to exhibit and perform "all such entertainments of music and action as were commonly called pantomimes and ballets, together with operatic or musical pieces, accompanied with dialogue in the ordinary mode of dramatic representations," subject, at all times, to the control and restraint of the Lord Chamberlain, "in conformity to the laws by which theatres possessing those extensive privileges were regulated." But all was in vain. The King would not "notice any representation connected with the establishment of another theatre." The other petitions were without result.

Gradually, however, it became necessary for the authorities to recognise the fact that the public really did require more amusements of a theatrical kind than the privileged theatres could furnish. But the regular drama, it was held, must still be protected; performed only on the patent boards. But now "burletta licenses" were issued, under cover of which melodramas were presented, with entertainments of music and dancing, spectacle and panto-

mime. In 1809, the Lyceum or English Opera House, which for some years before had been licensed for music and dancing, was licensed for "musical dramatic entertainments and ballets of action." The Adelphi, then called the Sans Pareil Theatre, received a "burletta license" about the same time. In 1813, the Olympic was licensed for the same performances and for horsemanship; but it was for a while closed again by the Chamberlain's order, upon Elliston's attempt to call the theatre Little Drury Lane, and to represent upon its stage something more like the "regular drama" than had been previously essayed at a minor house. "Burletta licenses" were also granted for the St. James's, in 1835, and for the Strand in 1836.

And, in despite of the authorities, theatres had been established on the Surrey side of the Thames; but, in truth, for the accommodation of dwellers on the Middlesex shore. Under the Licensing Act, while the Chamberlain was constituted licenser of all new plays throughout Great Britain, his power to grant licenses for theatrical entertainments was confined within the city and liberties of Westminster, and wherever the sovereign might reside. The Surrey, the Coburg (afterwards the Victoria), Astley's, &c., were, therefore, out of his jurisdiction. There seemed, indeed, to be no law in existence under which they could be licensed. They affected to be open under a magistrate's license for "music, dancing, and public entertainments." But this, in truth, afforded them no protection when it was thought worth while to prosecute the managers for presenting dramatic exhibitions. For although an act, passed in the 28th year of George the Third, enabled justices of the peace, under certain restrictions, to grant licenses for dramatic entertainments, their powers did not extend to within twenty miles of London. Lambeth was thus neutral ground, over which neither the Lord Chamberlain nor the country justices had any real authority; with this difficulty about the case: performances that could not be licensed could not be legalised.

The law continued in this unsatisfactory state until the passing, in 1843, of the Act for Regulating Theatres. This deprived the patent theatres of their monopoly of the "regular drama," in that it extended the Lord Chamberlain's power to grant licenses for the performance of

stage plays to all theatres within the parliamentary boundaries of the City of London and Westminster, and of the boroughs of Finsbury and Marylebone, the Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, and Southwark, and also "within those places where Her Majesty, her heirs and successors shall, in their royal persons, occasionally reside;" it being fully understood that all the theatres then existing in London would receive forthwith the Chamberlain's license "to give stage plays in the fullest sense of the word;" to be taken to include, according to the terms of the Act, "every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, interlude, melodrama, pantomime, or other entertainment of the stage, or any part thereof."

Thus, at last, more than a century after the passing of the Licensing Act, certain of its more mischievous restrictions were in effect repealed. A measure of free trade in theatres was established. The Lord Chamberlain was still to be "the lawful monarch of the stage," but in the future his rule was to be more constitutional, less absolute than it had been. The public were no longer to be confined to Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the winter, and the Haymarket in the summer. Actors were enabled, managers and public consenting, to personate Hamlet or Macbeth, or other heroes of the poetic stage, at Lambeth, Clerkenwell, or Shoreditch, anywhere indeed, without risk of committal to gaol. It was no longer necessary to call a play a "burletta," or to touch a note upon the piano, now and then, in the course of a performance, so as to justify its claim to be a musical entertainment; all subterfuges of this kind ceased.

It was with considerable reluctance, however, that the Chamberlain, in his character of Licensor of Playhouses, divested himself of the paternal authority he had so long exercised. He long clung to the notion that he was a far better judge of the requirements and desires of playgoers than they could possibly be themselves. He was strongly of opinion that the number of theatres was "sufficient for the theatrical wants of the metropolis." He could not allow that the matter should be regulated by the ordinary laws of supply and demand, or by any regard for the large annual increase of the population. Systematically he hindered all enterprise in the direction of new theatres. It was always doubtful whether his license would be

granted, even after a new building had been completed. He decided that he must be guided by his own views of "the interests of the public." It is not clear that he possessed authority in this respect other than that derived from custom and the traditions of his office. The Act of 1843 contained no special provisions on the subject. But he insisted that all applicants for the licensing of new theatres should be armed with petitions in favour of the proposal signed by many of the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of the projected building; he required the Police Commissioners to verify the truth of these petitions, and to report whether inconvenience was likely to result in the way of interruption of traffic, or otherwise from the establishment of a new theatre. Further, he obtained the opinion of the parish authorities, the churchwardens, &c., of the district; he was even suspected of taking counsel with the managers of neighbouring establishments; "in short, he endeavoured to convince himself generally that the grant of the license would satisfy a legitimate want"—or what the Chamberlain in his wisdom or his unwisdom, held to be such.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that for nearly a quarter of a century there was no addition made to the list of London theatres. But time moves on, and even Chamberlains have to move with it. Of late years there has been no difficulty in regard to the licensing of new playhouses, and the metropolis has been the richer by many well conducted houses of dramatic entertainment.

FIREWORKS.

A POPULAR belief exists that the pyrotechnic art is due to the ingenuity of the Chinese; but, unfortunately, this theory will not bear examination, for although the Chinese have gone on popping trumpery little crackers and aquatic fireworks for thousands of years, they have never improved upon those primitive contrivances, of which they explode at home, and export to America, a vast quantity. The East doubtless produced wise men in its time, but that time is long since over, and the youth of Asia are at this day the pupils of Western philosophers. Indian Brahmins learn chess out of the famous Handbuch, and the Chinese, when they want really good fireworks, send to London for them.

In Europe a considerable advance on any known form of Chinese pyrotechny was made more than two hundred years ago. Without stirring up the Greek fire, or plunging into the mysteries of mediæval fireworks, I have the evidence of "John Babington, gunner and student in the mathematics" that highly ornamental designs were produced as early as 1635. The genius of this gentleman impelled him to write a curious folio, "Pyrotechnia, or a Discourse of Artificial Fireworks, in which the true grounds of that Art are plainly and perspicuously laid downe, &c. &c. Whereunto is annexed a short treatise of Geometrie." This singular volume contains ample instruction in the art of making rockets, wheels, &c., and is embellished with many well-executed engravings, showing with great exactitude the method of making fireworks then in use. According to a fashion which prevailed till a recent date, the foundation of most of the compositions is gunpowder "mealed;" and although many quaint recipes are given for coloured stars, none of them inspire the reader with absolute faith. We are shown how to represent a coat of arms in fire, how to compose a castle of fire, an "antick dance" and "how to make a dragon or any other creature run upon a line." Mr. Babington may have done all these things as well as have written about them; at any rate, he wrote a book representing, if not the deeds, the aspirations of an enthusiastic firework maker, who had long since outstripped the trumpery traditions of the East.

Since Babington's day many noteworthy exhibitions have taken place. In 1697 no less a sum than twelve thousand pounds was spent to celebrate the Peace of Ryswick. In like manner the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was fêted in 1748—in 1814 the hundredth anniversary of the accession of the reigning family was marked by a display in St. James's Park—and in 1856 a grand exhibition of fireworks was given in the London Parks on the conclusion of peace with Russia. On this occasion no special devices, Chinese bridges, temples of concord, &c., were attempted, the display being principally confined to fountains and cascades of fire and aerial fireworks—shells, rockets, and parachutes.

Handsome and brilliant as was this display, it yet wanted the charm of modern fireworks, as shown in perfection at the Crystal Palace, at Sydenham. This consists in the profuse introduction of colour

—an art not more than thirty or forty years old. Tinted fireworks were first exhaustively dealt with by Chertier, in 1840, who was followed a few years later by Tessier, a regularly educated chemist—who, far more scientific than his predecessor, lacked in many respects his technical skill. The researches of these clever Frenchmen have been utilised and their methods greatly improved during the last ten years by Mr. C. T. Brock, Pyrotechnist to the Crystal Palace, who has succeeded in bringing coloured fireworks to a piten of perfection unimaginable by the last generation.

To the despair of magistrates, the framers of Government bills, and other anti-explosive persons, fireworks must be made somewhere, although the small practitioners have been, if not exterminated, widely scattered by Government inspectors; and it is only under severe restrictions that fireworks are allowed to be made at all. Not within fifty feet of any dwelling-house must the operation be carried on, and the quantity of gunpowder to be kept in store is rigidly prescribed. Wishing to see how all these nice but necessary conditions are fulfilled, I wend my way, an amateur in fireworks, to Nunhead Green, where my attention is at once attracted by a huge board, which, by its grim suggestiveness, almost sends me back to Ludgate Hill by the next train. It is inscribed, "This way to the cemetery—keep to the right." Not yet, I think, while a general "goosey" feeling creeps over my epidermis, but who knows? This firework factory has been going on for about ten years without a serious accident—it is therefore about time that one came off. Perhaps to-day is set down in the law of averages. If so, the cemetery is "convenient."

Revolving these things, I seek for the firework factory, and find it not. Grewsome silence prevails. My first impression is that I have missed my visit, that the entire establishment blew up last night—and that my host, his wife and family, his horses, and his men, his acts and his fireworks are things of the past. I am like the immortal Blenkinsop "preematoor." Mr. Brock is here, alive and smiling, and assures me that "this is the factory."

The term "factory" is associated in almost every mind with the idea of a huge building, crowded to the roof with busy "hands" and pouring out volumes of smoke from lofty chimneys—with the rattle

and clatter of machinery, a certain well-defined oily smell, steam engines, boilers, James Watt, Hargreaves, Arkwright, and other masters of the art of creating and multiplying motion. Mr. Brock's firework factory is a very different "institution." Here is no smoke, no fire, no noise, no bustle, no large buildings. There is a great green square of meadow—some eight acres in extent, dotted over by dozens of little huts at wide intervals, like the plums in a school pudding. These huts are instalments of the firework factory, placed at such distance from each other, that an explosion in any one of them would not affect the rest. Throughout the conduct of the very ticklish business of firework making, this principle is carefully carried out. No more explosive matter is kept on the premises than is needed for the day's work, the stock being regularly replenished from a barge kept "down the river," where people are used to explosions. Chlorates and nitrates are also placed in sheds at a respectful distance from sulphur, and the precautions observed in the mixing and filling sheds are exceedingly numerous. Each shed, capable of holding at most half-a-dozen people, is carpeted with kamptulicon, and the "fillers," are moreover compelled to wear woollen slippers while at work. A formidable list of rules is pasted up in every shed. No workman may smoke or carry matches about him within or near the factory; all doors are to be kept unfastened, except by a thin string or latch while people are within; numerous precautions are enjoined as to the treatment of coloured fire, and pails of water must be placed at the door of each shed, the first thing in the morning before work begins. The work-people are also significantly warned that any person setting these rules at defiance is liable to be taken before a magistrate and fined five pounds.

At a very respectful distance from the powder magazine, the firework magazine, and the drying house for coloured stars, are two sheds of larger dimensions than their kindred. One of these is the rolling-shed, and the other contains a collection of the less dangerous components of fireworks. Here are barrels of soft wood charcoal—traditionally of dogwood, but actually made from willow and alder. This is the kind of charcoal used by gunpowder makers, and is largely employed in the manufacture of almost

every kind of firework. Here also are stores of peculiarly fine, thick, and heavy brown paper, hand and machine made from brown rope, and many reams of cartridge and other varieties of white paper; many hundredweight of pins for attaching "quickmatch" to set pieces; barrels of steel and iron-filings and turnings, for producing bright starry coruscations; and chemicals for "colouring"—nitrate of strontia for producing red, nitrate of baryta for green, sulphuret of antimony for white; oxychloride, carbonate and arsenate of copper for blue fires and stars. When great brilliancy is required, chlorates are substituted for the nitrates above enumerated—chlorate of baryta, for instance, producing a more vivid green than the corresponding nitrate.

Before proceeding to explain how fireworks are actually made, it may be well, to save time, to state as briefly as possible the general principle which governs their construction. The motive power of rockets, Catherine and all the more beautiful and complicated wheels which give such a charm to set pieces, is simply due to the rapid evolution of gas. A rocket or a pin-wheel being set alight produces gas, with sufficient rapidity to press against the atmospheric air and impel it onwards in its course, be the same rectilineal or circular. By a nice calculation and arrangement of the various parts of a set piece, the pyrotechnist makes his wheels move in the precise direction and with the exact speed required.

The material of which fireworks are made is not gunpowder, but rather gunpowder debased by the addition of ingredients which reduce its rate of combustion. In olden times and among small makers the practice prevailed of mixing gunpowder with more charcoal, and thus reducing it to the strength required in firework material; but Mr. Brock, who adds sound chemical knowledge to practical skill as a manipulator, soon found that it would be more economical and far more convenient to start from first principles and construct the firework mixture from its proper elements according to a precise formula. This system has been so completely carried out that at Nunhead Green not more than five per cent. of the material used is actual gunpowder. The difference between this and firework "charge" is this: gunpowder contains, in round numbers, six parts of nitre to one part of sulphur and one part of charcoal. Setting aside other pecu-

liarities of its manufacture, this composition would never make good fireworks, simply because it burns too rapidly. The point then to be attained is the due proportion of nitrate or chlorate to carbon, that the "burner" may be checked sufficiently by the quantity of material to be burned.

The result of much thought and many experiments has been the production of a mixture which may be looked upon as forming, with slight variation, the charge for the majority of the fireworks made at Nunhead. Sulphur has been discarded almost entirely, except for illuminating purposes, and a compound of seven parts of chlorate of potash with one part of shellac may be considered a fair type of Mr. Brock's favourite mixture. For the production of certain effects charcoal is indispensable; but shellac is found in the majority of cases to replace it advantageously. To this "charge" is added the colouring matters when required. This operation is very carefully performed, and the charge is now thoroughly mixed, and is ready, according to its proportions, for conversion into coloured stars, rockets, Roman candles, wheels, mines, tourbillons, Chinese trees, golden flower-pots, or slow burning illumination lights.

Stars form an important element of modern pyrotechny. As at the great displays at the Crystal Palace millions of these are shot into the air at once, with the splendid effect familiar to Londoners, it may be imagined that the work of preparing them occupies a large number of hands. Composed mainly of chlorate of potash, the star mixture is made up in various forms. In one busy little hut boys are employed in compressing the dry composition into tiny cylinders by the aid of a neat little hand machine; in a shed hard by the now dingy-looking powder is being jammed into pill-boxes, without top or bottom; while, in yet "another place," a wet paste is undergoing an operation which presents a curious culinary aspect. The paste is laid on a board and duly smoothed and patted out till it is of uniform thickness, when an active youth criss-crosses it into tiny squares which, when dry, are broken up into the famous "bright" stars which are the peculiar pride of Mr. Brock.

The "charge" and the "stars" being now made, we proceed to the rolling-shed, where are rolled the paper cases destined to contain these festive combustibles. The first point to be considered in making fire-

work cases is, that they shall be strong enough to hold their contents firmly, and prevent them from burning except in the direction required. Hitherto no material has been found to fulfil these conditions so well as paper, pasted layer by layer over a roller. Iron has been tried, but is too dangerous, in case of explosion, for holiday fireworks, and papier-maché proved not only costly but weak. The dull months of winter are therefore passed mainly in the rolling-shed, in diligently pasting and rolling millions upon millions of cases. Fireworks as delivered to the purchaser after being neatly covered with white paper, convey no idea of the tremendous wall of brown paper which confines the charge. Well rolled, pasted, and thoroughly dried, the cases become astonishingly hard and solid, and frequently exceed half an inch in thickness. The manufacture of a case for a twelve-inch shell is a highly interesting and amusing sight. The workman is supplied with ample store of the heavy brown paper, previously alluded to, a paste-pot, and a mould of hemispherical form. Into the hollow of this he, like a cook lining a pudding basin with the undercrust, pastes layer on layer of paper, using only just enough paste to secure perfect adhesion. The shell, having been thus made in two halves, is glued together; the joint is firmly secured, and the paper sphere is almost as hard and heavy as if it were made of iron. An aperture is left to admit the filling and the fuse, and the shell is now thoroughly dried. A twelve-inch shell receives a tremendous charge, composed of sixteen pounds, or three thousand five hundred bright-coloured or magnesium stars, and a due proportion of explosive filling. Into an aperture at one of the poles is fixed the fuse, deftly made to burn just long enough to allow the shell to attain its maximum elevation and begin to descend, before it communicates with the bursting charge and scatters its brilliant burden. To the opposite pole is attached a paper cone or, better still, a flannel bag, containing a charge of gunpowder, carefully proportioned to the fuse. To ensure the almost simultaneous ignition of the fuse and the powder in the bag, a line of quick-match is conducted from the fuse round the sides of the shell to the powder and continued in a long string, which hangs outside the mouth of the mortar. This is a vertical cylinder of iron, fitting the shell, not too tightly, and open at the upper end. On fire being applied to the end of quick-

match, hanging over the edge of the mortar, the fuse is lighted, the propelling charge of gunpowder ignited, and the shell shot into the air with resplendent effect.

After the shell the rocket is perhaps the most brilliant of aerial fireworks. As is pretty well known, the civil service rocket is not fired from a tube like its big military brother, but is left to make its own way through the sky on the simple principle already described. Rocket cases are made chiefly of the Arbourfield brown paper, and are prepared with very great care. Strictly speaking, the rocket consists of three parts, the cap, the shaft, and the stick. The latter merely serves the same purpose as a tail to a kite, and may be briefly dismissed, but the cap and shaft are constructed to fulfil exactly opposite conditions. The shaft case is made very strong and solid, in order to retain its contents for a sufficient time; it is made with great attention to proportion, and if carefully filled with the proper mixture, should have a nearly complete tail from the starting point, until the stars are shown by the bursting of the cap. It also, like the shell, should tip over before the head bursts, or the rocket will be seen ascending, after the stars have been scattered—a dreadful sight to the critical pyrotechnist.

The rocket shaft having been skilfully rolled and dried, has next to be filled with a special composition, differing only from ordinary gunpowder in containing a larger proportion of charcoal, and in being in powder instead of grain. Eight parts of saltpetre, two parts of sulphur, and three and three quarter parts of charcoal, compose Mr. Brock's rocket composition, and he insists very strongly that this mixture combines the greatest propelling power with exceeding brilliancy. The charging of the rocket case is a peculiar operation, differing in many respects from that pursued in the case of squibs, Roman candles, &c. To secure the rapid evolution of gas, by which alone a high velocity can be attained, it is necessary to expose a large surface to combustion. To effect this, the rocket shaft, instead of being a cylinder filled full of composition, is, by the insertion of a spindle during the operation of charging, provided with a hollow chamber, which tapers upwards from the base, for about three quarters of the entire length. The workman, seated on a stool made of a section of a tree, perfectly

certain that neither iron nor matches are about, proceeds with the ticklish operation of charging. Scoopful by scoopful the composition is filled in, and rammed down into a firm mass with boxwood rammers or "drift tools," driven home by a mallet—the hollow chamber being preserved by the presence of the spindle. At the top the rocket is closed by a little powdered clay, with the exception of a small aperture to allow the ignition of the contents of the cap. This is made of much lighter material than the shaft, and is filled with bright and coloured stars, and a charge sufficient to ignite them and burst the case. All the processes of making a rocket are conducted with very great nicety, as the slightest mistake would involve ignominious failure.

The manufacture of rockets and shells, pretty and delicate as it is, occupies only one department of the scattered factory. Roman candles are filled in a very peculiar way. As my readers well know, the Roman candle is not a frisky and capricious being like the rocket, nor a noisy impostor like the maroon—whose sound and fury signify that the grand display of fireworks is "just about to begin"—but is quiet, modest and pretty withal, a creature of sweetness and "coloured" light. It is produced by filling a strong case in layers, arranged ingeniously, in the following order—composition or white light, a pinch of gunpowder and a star, composition, gunpowder and star again, and so on. As the composition burns down it lights the star, and on the flame reaching the pinch of gunpowder under the star, this is shot out of the case into the air. It is amusing enough to watch the workpeople making Roman candles, and popping in the variously coloured stars, with their accompaniment of composition, and the necessary gunpowder propeller to every star. Roman candles fill an important part in the peculiar structure known as the "Devil among the Tailors," and in other more or less complicated "pieces"—such as "Bouquets" and "Gerbs" or "Chinese Trees." The latter are often made on a large scale, and at the Crystal Palace appear like immense fountains of fire. Gerb composition is made of six parts of nitre to one of charcoal, and one of sulphur—identically the proportions of gunpowder—added to four parts of iron turnings. It is essential to the production of a brilliant "Chinese Tree" that the iron turnings

should be very thin and light, as otherwise they do not burn rapidly enough. These elegant fireworks require cases of immense thickness, and sometimes contain as much as five pounds of composition.

Proceeding from these very beautiful, but comparatively simple productions, to the vast and complicated "set pieces," I find that these consist mainly of more or less elaborate wheels, connected by hundreds, or rather thousands of "lances"—the technical term for a small tube about the size of a squib, filled with ordinary composition. The making of "lances" occupies many nimble fingers. Letters, figures, and other designs of a "set" character, are all made of these lances, which are ignited by a string of quick-match. In the open air, outside of a hut, the manufacture of this indispensable fire conductor is going on at a great rate. A piece, many yards long, of lamp cotton, is saturated with wet gunpowder, and is then reeled off and dried. In this state it is only slow-match, and requires to be encased in a tube of white paper before it becomes "quick." To facilitate this operation, it is cut into lengths and then insinuated into the paper tubing. In making this fiery macaroni, girls are employed, and turn out millions of yards in the course of the year.

Some idea of the labour involved in a grand display at the Crystal Palace may be formed from the fact that three tons of these carefully prepared fireworks are "let off" in a single evening.

Nunhead has been very busy of late in making fireworks of the humbler sort. The weather for grand displays is over; but the time-honoured celebration of San Guido, otherwise Guy Fawkes, makes immense demands upon firework makers. "November goods,"—squibs, crackers, Catherine wheels, blue devils, and snakes—have been carted off in tons during the last few weeks. Of this small fry Guy Fawkes requires at the hands of Mr. Brock about three million pieces. Touching the danger of firework making this gentleman is very sceptical. He is a true enthusiast in his profession, and is inclined to deride the idea of being "blown up." Both as a practical man and a theorist he believes that with proper precautions firework making is a reasonably safe, very healthy, and vastly interesting pursuit. May Nunhead long survive to tell the tale!

A NIGHT IN GRANADA.

So the people of San Salvador have nearly rebuilt their town after the late earthquake! Six times already the city of San Salvador had been tossed up, wrenched, grappled, and beset, till tower, and church, and cottage lay prone in a cloud of dust. This last catastrophe makes the seventh. But seven destructions, apparently, have not rooted out the love of birthplace. The inhabitants are building it up again, like to the city I remember, cautious only in the respect that no house shall have a second story. Who will call the Central Americans fickle after this? With all a fine province in which to choose a site, they cling to this one spot, manifestly abhorred of Heaven. It has no particular advantages visible to the foreign eye; or, if advantages it have, the inhabitants don't use them. There is a river, but no commerce. The city has indeed associations, traditions, of no small interest, but San Salvador boasts itself against Costa Rica in the respect of freedom from Indian blood. It may, however, be contested whether Indian or negro make the worse admixture with the white man, and of mulattos San Salvador possesses a number incomprehensible. To the stolid and presumptuous obstinacy of this race may possibly be owing the persistence with which the Salvadorians cling to their fated capital. What manner of courage it is they show, what awful forces they defy, I purpose to tell you in this paper, taking my text in personal experience. Not in San Salvador, however, did I enjoy the adventures here narrated. The newspaper paragraph has but recalled to me a dreadful "scare" which befell in the rival capital of Nicaragua, on the tenth of January, 1866—a day not likely to be forgotten in Granada.

It chanced that several foreigners were in the town, besides myself and my travelling companion; a young Californian, on his way to "see the world;" two gentlemen connected with the mines of Chontales, whereof great things were expected at that time; a man of science from England, geologist or entomologist, I forget which; a professional gambler, "sportsman" he called himself; a Norwegian, on the home track to enjoy a fortune hardly earned; these, with a young doctor from the States, whose diploma "had got lost," made up our motley crew. We were nearly all young, even the gambler,

who boasted that no other profession would have earned him twenty thousand pounds at the age of twenty-four. The amusements of Granada are generally found wearisome up to a certain age, unless one be to the boredom native, so we resolved to give a ball. Whose proposition this festivity was I don't quite recollect, but, when it had been suggested, every one of our party found some peculiar attraction therein.

Said my dear friend Jack, "Now we shall see what these folks can do. They won't work, they don't know how to play. I believe they have concentrated all their energies upon the fandango."

Said Schmit, the sportsman, "Some of the hombres might have an ounce or two. I guess I'll look up the old fixins, an' git ready for consequences. I've seen more'n a sample of Greasers, an' I tell you your ball wall be flat as a skatin' floor without my bank."

"Excellent idea," exclaimed the scientific man. "No doubt the Indians will show us their ancient dances, and we may fancy ourselves conquistadores, watching the virgins of the sun dancing before Montezuma!" A soft man, rather, was our scientific.

"My!" said the gentleman on his travels, "this will be something, you bet! I guess I own a pair of pants will rayther delight them Muchachas. I got 'em for Job Peebles's wedding, up to Sacramento; and they was talked of large. A mite long in the leg, maybe; but I'll take in a reef."

So, with universal good wishes, we made arrangements for our ball.

First we hired an empty house, which, when snakes and cats had been dislodged, young trees uprooted, and bats informed that their roosts were wanted for that night, gave us a decent ball-room. From Massaya four Indian fiddlers were engaged, and Granada proved equal to the furnishing of two flutes. Aguardiente and claret we laid in largely, and subscriptions in kind for decoration were invited.

The scientific man lent us some excellent preparations of natural history. Schmit fixed up two buffalo robes, some feather fans, the model of a bark canoe, and a Pawnee idol. The Californian furnished us with portraits of his greatest friends and of several ladies, more or less cherished in his memory. One of the miners insisted on displaying some fine specimens of quartz, which he suspended

on strings. The doctor alone gave nothing special; but the way he chuckled to himself during the consultation assured us of some secret resolve.

The night arrived—a soft and cloudless evening. Stars sparkled out, whilst yet the Western sky burnt orange. Under that gentle light the ruined city took a softness not its own. Its green-edged streets, straight, dusty, and dazzling, loomed romantic. Over them hung palm trees, that glittered icily in the rising moon. The very ruins, gaunt monuments of ruthless war, took a mystery belonging not to them. Very gently the night wind rustled in the green garlands round their heads. There was no warning anywhere of the wild work to come.

I crossed the plaza about eight o'clock. Nearly all the population was assembled there, chatting, love-making, in the moonlight, a picturesque crowd. But as I passed, a cicale suddenly broke into song, so loud, so shrill, that it topped the murmur of the people. It sang from the loop of a great bell, standing upright on the shattered pavement, beneath its broken campanile, which threw a tufted shadow across the grass. Drawn by the sound, great bats swung from aloft, and flittered almost in my face. A night-hawk skimmed past on ghostly and noiseless wing, sank in the bare, burnt herbage, and rose again under my very feet, with the faintest twittering. To such desolation is reduced the stately capital of Hernandez de Cordova.

The doctor lived in one of those huge palaces which attest the ancient glory of Granada. Few of them escaped the flames when Henningsen, Walker's lieutenant, set all the city "in a lowe, and slokened it with blood." But those spared of the fire are built to withstand the rage of time. There were no lights behind the windows' heavy grating; and my hammer at the doors, full ten feet high, brought no response. I pushed them open, and entered the vast bare hall. It was dark as a grave.

"Doctor!" I cried; "Doctor!" and was groping towards the opposite door, which opened, of course, in the courtyard, when a chain rattled sharply behind me, and arms of overpowering strength grasped me about the waist. I thought they belonged to the doctor, and laughingly tried to disengage myself. Horror! The circling arms were covered with close, fine fur, and a long growl warned me to rest quiet. My nerves were young then and stout. I knew the doctor's puma had me

in his grasp, and though sick with fear, I remained still, hoarsely shouting.

The brute did not loose hold, but he kept his claws hid in their velvet, and rubbed his smooth head against my shoulders, purring like a gigantic cat. I felt his hot breath on my neck, and his body was pressed against mine by iron muscles. It seemed an age before the doctor answered, coming with a light across the yard. At a word from him the beautiful beast leapt from me, rolling like a kitten on the ground, biting its chain. I staggered into the doctor's arms, which could scarcely hold me, so frightened was he.

This puma was to have been our friend's contribution towards the ornament of the ball-room, and he had fastened it by the doorway in readiness to take with him; but without difficulty I persuaded him to let it stop at home. A stiff glass of brandy brought me round, and we set off together through the moonlit and solitary streets.

The ball had commenced before our arrival; had, in fact, already reached that point when popular enthusiasm demanded the national dance.

Such music as the band struck up I cannot describe. It was a mingling of Spanish energy, always tending towards license, with the melancholic harmony of Indian strains. The result was madness, nothing less. Under the influence of that music one felt one's reason go, not gradually, but all at once. A demoniac possession got hold of us.

The musicians leapt to their feet, and ground their instruments with a passionate flourish. The dancers whirled in a cloud of dust, jerking out interjections. It was a Witches' Sabbath! I, looking on, shouted with the rest. Legs and arms spun together. Such a dance is the Nicaraguese!

The music ceased as suddenly as it begun. Girls, half fainting, were led to their seats. The dust settling down made us all cough like inmates of a consumptive hospital. As the enchantment ceased, our bare walls, scantily covered with flags and blankets, looked more miserable than before. The fat old mulatress who dispensed refreshments—honest creature enough!—seemed a foul Megæra. Through doors and windows, meanwhile, streamed ivory moonlight, flecked with plumey shadows of the palms. And there was Schmit, vulture-eyed, superintending the

arrangement of a faro table. Filled with a nameless disgust, I went out.

Others of our guests followed the example, perhaps with a like feeling. I strolled from house to house in the street, for nearly all were open. Representations of the Nativity, a Christmas fashion of Nicaragua, were yet on view for the edification of the pious. Shall I dare to tell what I saw? It will need the gravest assertion of veracity, the which I here give without reservation of any kind, to convince an English reader that this account is not exaggerated. But it is not only true; it even contains not all the truth, for there are things common in Central America with which I dare not stain these pages.

This then I saw, or the like of it, in half-a-dozen houses. A stage of green baize, three to five feet long, and two to four feet deep. At back, a toy bedstead, with silk or satin hangings. In bed, a penny doll. Hanging over it, another penny doll, dressed in white satin. In front, with his back to the bed, a third, in monastic costume, twice as tall as the woman; this to represent Saint Joseph.

All round, disposed according to principles of order incomprehensible, a crowd of dolls, beasts from "Noah's Ark" boxes, figures off cakes, and plaster-of-Paris images. On the Tower of Babel was set out a doll's tea-service. Tin soldiers marched in order undisturbable under parsley trees, though against them, smiling, but terrible, advanced a China shepherdess with the evident resolve of eating up those little warriors. The lamb she led scowled ferociously. Herod, near by, wore a tinsel helmet. Pontius Pilate shone in a breastplate made of four spangles sewn together. Flying Cupids, each provided with a decent spangle about the waist, hovered over the scene. In the immediate foreground, before the footlights, stood as many images of the sort retailed by Italian boys in Europe as the householder could lay hands on. Victor Emanuel, Garibaldi, and the late Emperor Napoleon were everywhere represented. The Venus dei Medici, attired in satin, had her place in several shows; in one, where her figure was larger, she was posted outside the stage for adoration of the faithful.

In another place I saw half-a-dozen women telling their beads before Venus in a blue petticoat; and, not far off, I observed a common statuette, of plaster,

representing a ballet girl pirouetting, dressed in blue silk, and offered for worship—not in vain. Such is the religion of Central America. Were not the old idols more dignified?

It was near half-past ten when I returned to the ball room. Before reaching the place, I heard a murmur of evil omen. Jack was standing in the crowd outside, and he hastened up on seeing me.

"Schmit is in a row," he said, "as I knew the fellow would be. They accuse him of cheating at faro. Shall we interfere, or leave him?"

"My dear fellow," I answered, "we have knowingly meddled with the substance called pitch, and are defiled. Let us not mess our fingers more deeply by abandoning a comrade in a fix. At the same time, I don't believe Schmit has cheated on this occasion."

Nor do I, even now.

There is a sort of honour amongst "sportsmen," in America, as there was with the Barry Lindons and Casanovas of last century. Schmit would have swindled his own father in the ordinary way of business, but would not have put an innocent partner into "the hole."

We pushed through. The orchestra was playing a waltz of the *trois temps* species, and two or three couples circled round. But the crowd was gathered in the left hand corner, where our comrade, pale, but easy, dominated the hubbub—it was not the first time that he had figured as the hero of a similar scene. That man's life, could it be told, would bear the record of a hundred quarrels more perilous by far than this one. His fortune had been slowly won through a succession of them. What were we, you murmur, who joined such a man on terms of equality? You, reader, are an English gentleman, I doubt not, who ask the question. Go for a travel in Central America, and you will understand.

The row was growing hot. What was the gravamen of the dispute, I don't know, but it had passed the bounds of argument. A score of voices were raised in furious contention, two score of fists were brandished in the air, round Schmit. As I pushed roughly through, followed by others, the moment of action arrived. A tin scone, wrenched from the wall, struck the gambler on his forehead, and battle joined. It was just one of those wild *mêlées* only seen in Ireland and in America.

We struck all ways, we kicked any limb

in reach. The crowd did, that is, for I was early levelled. But in a second's time, a burly Nicaraguan fell across me, and, unable to rise, did battle horizontally.

The big brute struck with his knees, and bit, and tried to throttle me. I pounded at his head. Round and upon us were trampling feet, unbooted for the most part. My adversary's shirt, coatless he was, yielded at once, and he fought half naked. A heavy foot of some person unknown laid me flat again, just as I aimed a finishing blow at my antagonist. He threw himself upon me, twisting both paws in my shirt collar, and so lay, panting, but throttling me, his face on mine. I could not use my arms. The dusty mist turned red. I was choking—and then—I thought it fancy—the floor upheaved beneath me.

I was tossed up, and fell again, and lay rolling. Fury and pain had been the burden of the uproar hitherto, but now it was a shout of fear. Hurrying feet swept over us, and tripped, and tumbled headlong. My enemy gave way, screaming "tremblor!" with bloody jaws.

In an instant the room was cleared, save for a half dozen who scrambled on the floor. I rose to my feet, dizzily. The air was so full of dust, that no man could see a door. A scream of terror filled not the house only, but the street. Two or three fallen sconces burnt on the floor, dimly, and by the table overthrown flared fire, red in the dust, where a shrieking wretch struggled to put out his ignited shirt. I cleared my eyes, my brain, and ran towards the spot where a door must be. As I ran, the earth surged up again, and tossed me, as one is tossed on a see-saw. The sconces rattled to the ground, rolling and going out. The yell outshrieked itself, and crash—crash—the plaster fell. Red flames appeared on the ground level. I found my feet, only to fall again. Voices of men had died away, or were lost in the dread tumult—crackle of beam, rustle of stout walls settling, crash of tiled roof and timbers. Dust whirled so thick, I could not see the fires, if fires remained. Door there was none. I sat upon the ground, choking, resigned, amazed that death held off. Again and again shivered that sick heave. Unseen objects, falling all round, made the earth shake, but none struck me. Suddenly, after an awful crash, I saw blue light shimmering close by. I gained my feet and leapt towards it, tripped over fallen rubbish, and fell

prone into the street. Before my senses went, I saw the whole house I had just left sink bodily down, like a house of snow, leaving nought behind but thickening dust.

Some time after, I opened my eyes, and surveyed the ruin. Six or eight houses in sight lay overthrown. Smoke and dust rose from them in spirals, and small tongues of flames glanced here and there.

The street was still, but from a distance came dull murmurs, as of a people chanting in mournful cadence. Oh, but it was lovely, the still, blue night above! Not a cloud in the moonlit sky, not a breath of wind. The palm tree over against me drooped its smooth leaves like a banner, unruffled by the convulsion. Bruised and bewildered, but anxious for the safety of my friends, I dragged myself towards the plaza. Everywhere ruin! I passed several houses in a blaze, which none tried to put out. But in the older and handsomer quarters damage was not common. The Conquistadores built for an age, if not for all time, and the powers of earthquake do not easily prevail against their labour. As I went on, through fire and smoke and dust, feeling often a dizzy quiver under foot, the faint hum of chanting grew louder. It came from the plaza.

Soon I heard it clearly, and soon I saw the crowd. First in the march, circling round the plaza, came priests bearing the Host. Bells tinkled before them, and behind a half-score Indians, drawing such wails of terror from their fiddle-strings as never breathed from violin before. Followed all the population of Granada, black clad for the most part, bearing red torches, and moaning to the fiddles. Some corpses were borne along. What faces were those I saw, living and dead, in the ruddy torch-light! Madness burnt in the swollen eyes, madness of fear. Mouths quivered and worked in chanting broken words.

Now and again a woman's scream, shrill and sudden, rang out, and was answered by incoherent wails. I dream of that procession sometimes, seeing again black robes, red flare, and burning, agonised, blood-stained faces; in the midst a calm grey mask, quiet for ever, resting on men's shoulders. I hear the fiddles scream, and the wail of a whole people agonised—ten thousand voices chanting the "De Profundis." I remember what a night and day we passed. Eighty-three earthquakes shook Granada in those twenty-four hours. No safety anywhere, no escape from the

horrible shiver. In the house, death from above; in the open, death gaping below. We all encamped upon such clear ground as there was; but, lo! the plaza split across, and yawned, and closed again in all men's sight. No safety! for the lake swept its beach with such wild waves, boats could not live, and men were drowned far inland.

A time of terror without name, when one seemed to lie under a nightmare of living reality. A fortnight the horror lasted, each hour a torment of suspense. Then quiet returned, and Granada set itself to rebuild, to dig out furniture, to bury its dead, as they are now doing in San Salvador.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "NO ALTERNATIVE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXVII. "THE LITTLE SPECK ON GARNERED FRUIT."

THEY are long, lazy, happy sunny days that follow on this reunion. Though "the rain it raineth every day" in Ireland, still the climate is so joyous that it beams out into the broadest and sunniest smiles immediately after the heaviest showers.

The Granges hold on at Bray with the tenacity of limpets, and with an amount of endurance that is admirable in its way. Mr. Grange goes through the long-drawn-out agony of a swiftly running hotel bill for the sake of his sister, when, but for her, he could live upon his mother-in-law for nothing in London. But his wife points out to him that the end will justify the means, and that he will be thrice blessed in the peace he is purchasing for the future at the cost of the few extra pounds in the present.

On his side it must be admitted that his sister Charlotte, for whom he is making these sacrifices, is not an unmixed blessing. She gibes at him, when they are alone, whenever she has the opportunity, and he gives frequent opportunities for gibing.

"It will not be for long," his wife tells him when he groans under the weight of his chains, and complains that Charlotte has become more arrogant of late, and more insolently self-assured in her demeanour. "It will not be for long; Frank Forest flirts with her now in the most open and undisguised manner; though he must see as plainly as the rest do that his

pet, Kate, of whom he used to think so much, hates her, and I am sure I don't wonder at that," Mrs. Grange continues, "for without being able to fix on any one thing in particular that's objectionable about Charlotte, she is hateful from some cause or other."

"She ought to remember what she owes to you, I am sure," Mr. Grange replies, nervously, for, above all things, he dreads his wife rising against his sister, and perhaps compelling him to take sides against that handsome family incubus. But Mrs. Grange is wiser in her generation than to do this. Better a brief period of acute pain which may result in being freed for the rest of their lives from the cause of it, than the long-drawn out agony of Charlotte for ever unmarried on their hands.

It comes about quite naturally, through the good-natured agency of Mrs. Durgan, that Kate has nearly the daily use of Guinevere, and that Captain Bellairs and Frank are her constant escorts. Two or three times during the course of these rides, a word or two has been said about the Granges, by one or other of the men. But Kate cannot bring herself to respond to them in such a way as to induce Frank to continue the topic.

"Surely he is too honourable himself to really like a dishonourable woman," Kate tells herself sometimes, as she looks at her cousin. But her belief in this being the case is sure to be dashed to the ground the next time she sees Frank and Miss Grange together. If he does not like her he seems to like her, and certainly devotes an unconscionable share of his society and conversation to her. Gradually Miss Grange absorbs him so when the whole party happen to be together of an evening, that Kate has no alternative but to regard his manner to Miss Grange as an insult to the friendship he still sometimes professes for her, Kate.

With all the unguardedness of her honest courageous nature, she shows her cool aversion to Charlotte Grange plainly to her cousin, and he lightly and gaily disregards it, makes no allusion to it, treats it with the same affable indifference with which he would treat a fit of futile, groundless jealousy. The worst part of the whole unpleasant affair to Kate is, that she cannot help feeling that Frank's feelings of honour are as blunt as are those of Miss Grange. For, "if it were not so, he must have said something to me about that scene in the drawing-room at Lugnaquilla," she says to

Mrs. Durgan, to whom she has laid bare the secret of the repulsion she feels for the amiable, fair, smiling, courteous Miss Grange.

"A glamour is thrown over him," Mrs. Durgan says; "he's a clever, brilliant fellow that cousin of yours, Kate, but he's as unstable as water and as vain as a peacock. I shouldn't worry myself about him if I were you; let him be snared by her, he doesn't deserve a better fate, if, knowing what he does of her, he can make a parade of preferring her friendship to yours."

"It's that that mortifies me," Kate confesses; "I could have borne to be thrown over by Frank for a superior, but for a woman who is so infinitely my inferior—!"

"It's hard to be thrown over for anybody," Mrs. Durgan says, sadly. "The only thing left, it seems to me, is to say, in the words of the old song, 'I'll never love thee more,' and stick to the determination."

"But I can never say that about Frank," Kate says candidly; "I can't leave off liking him, and I can't leave off feeling ashamed that he should let me think that he is at the feet of a woman who is so much lower than any woman ought to be whose name can ever be associated with his—that's the nuisance of it. People say he was very much taken, or very attentive to, or whatever the stupid phrase may be, with Miss So-and-so and half a dozen somebody-elses, and we all get classed together, and regarded as being of the same moral and intellectual status; it does sting me!"

For a moment Mrs. Durgan's bright face becomes more radiantly bright than usual.

"You're a little in love with your cousin," she says, and her face dims slightly as Kate answers with truthful energy,

"No, I'm not now, not in the least degree; but I have been, you know, and I can't lose my interest in him."

"What would you say if you heard that Harry Bellairs were fascinated by her too," Mrs. Durgan presently asks, and Kate replies steadily enough, though her heart is throbbing,

"There would be nothing unnatural, nothing disgraceful in that; he does not know what Frank and I do, and she's as fair to the eye, as pretty and as pleasant as a woman need be."

"If Harry should prove himself weak, and she's playing for the highest stake, and will only take your cousin when she

has failed to secure mine, cannot you strip the mask off, and tell him what you know her to be?"

"Yes," Kate says, without hesitation; "she may hold her course now as she likes, and I won't shut her out of every honest house by proclaiming her conduct; but if she attempts to mix herself up with the life of anyone I love, that one shall know her for what she is——"

"Then you love Harry," Mrs. Durgan says, quietly; "well, dear, I don't wonder at it," and she holds a frank, friendly hand out to Kate, who stands, scarlet and self-convicted, before her.

Kate takes the friendly hand in all friendliness as it is offered to her; but she says not a word. She is not given to proclaiming her feelings on the housetops, unless she has some well-defined motive or is carried away by impulse. In this case she has been carried away by impulse, but having regained her judgment under the influence of the shock of feeling that she has openly betrayed herself, she tells herself that there is no dishonesty in maintaining a discreet reserve. That Mrs. Durgan has divined what is in her heart about Harry Bellairs, is patent. But there will be no deception, no sneaking treachery in her remaining quiescent about it now, and no attempt at throwing dust in anybody's eyes in the mere fact of refraining from wearing her heart upon her sleeve.

"Is she glad or sorry?" Kate asks herself a dozen times in the course of the ensuing few days, during which Mrs. Durgan is kinder to her than ever. "Does she think I am loving above my state in daring to care for a man who is the head of the house into which she has married? At any rate she never tries to make me feel that I am doing so, she's as generous as if she had no interest in the matter."

Kate makes this admission to herself in utter unsuspicion of Mrs. Durgan having such an interest in the matter, that, though she will not leave a plan unmade that may facilitate intercourse between her beautiful companion and her cousin, every hope that has made life bright to her of late years fades, fails, dies away within her, as she sees how dear that intercourse is becoming to both of them. But she never flags in her course, and never has a harsh thought concerning those who are causing her unwittingly the sharpest mental agony she has ever known.

Happy in her new home life, in the warm sympathy of her new friend, and the constant companionship of Harry Bellairs, Kate still has her mighty trial. Charlotte Grange is the thorn in her pillow, the cloud on her otherwise bright horizon, the bane of her life! She revolts at the sight of this unprincipled woman's visibly growing influence over Frank, and inwardly resents, as the deadliest insult Frank could have offered to her, the sight of the transfer of his devotion to Miss Grange.

But worse things than the enforced passive endurance of the growth and ripening of this bitter fruit await Kate. She finds herself one day, forced by the pressure of the general intimacy which has been established, into an hour's uninterrupted conversation with Miss Grange; and to Kate's great, unfeigned, disgusted surprise, Miss Grange does not shirk it!

That young woman, indeed, appears to be positively pleased at the prospect of holding unfettered communication with Frank's cousin, and in this pleasure there is rank offence to Kate. "If you were ashamed to look me in the face I might be idiotic enough to pity you, and so be tempted to hold my dagger," Miss Mervyn says to herself on the occasion of her finding herself forced into the position of being Miss Grange's entertainer one morning. As it is, misplaced pity has no part with her, and her manner is harder, cruder, more unlike her own than it has ever been to a human being in her life before.

Charlotte Grange has come here with her claws sharpened this day. She is prepared for the battle, for all the sultry calm and quiet of her demeanour. Frank has been dangling after her of late, but he has not been definite. He has paced round and round the trap, but the bait has not been sufficiently tempting to induce him to taste it to his own destruction as yet. Miss Grange has looked around her for a cause for this halting on his part, and in her own heart has decided that his discretion is due to his cousin.

That she will sting that cousin out of even the semblance of affectionate interest in him, and so wound his pride, or his heart, or his vanity, or whatever it is men are wounded in by evil speakers, liars, slanderers, and busy-bodies, is only a natural resolve for Miss Grange to come to.

"It is pleasant to get you alone, and keep your conversation to myself for once," Miss Grange begins with well assumed

friendly interest, as Kate reluctantly opens the disagreeable meeting by asking her unwelcome guest to be seated. "Mrs. Durgan or Captain Bellairs always monopolise you when we meet at Lugnaquilla, and I stand no chance of getting a word from you."

"There are very few people in the world who would stand a chance of getting a word from me when I am able to get a word from either Mrs. Durgan or Captain Bellairs," Kate says. Then she adds undauntedly, half hoping that her words may lead to a climax,

"My cousin Mr. Forest is one of that minority. I have no other acquaintances about me now whom I don't either dislike or despise."

She looks Miss Grange straight in the eyes as she says this, and this composed adversary does not either droop them, or change countenance in the slightest degree, or in any way make manifest that she is conscious of feeling less innocent than a mountain dove.

"Indeed," she says, quietly, when Kate has thrown her verbal gauntlet down. "Indeed; you seem to be so fond of Frank that I wish I had brought him over here to-day to see you; but I thought that it would be pleasant for us to have a little quiet chat together. I don't like to have a man running after me perpetually."

Those women only who have been goaded in the same way can understand how all the hate and rage that have hitherto been dormant in her nature, wake into life in Kate's breast as she hears this mean, undermining intruder grow insolent in her strength, and proclaim her triumph over Frank's credulity. To hear him called "Frank" too, by this woman, who says out the name with the light, easy, familiar air of one who is well accustomed to utter it! Kate feels degraded, as she looks at her successor and knows what manner of woman she is, by the spasm of jealousy which contracts her heart. Not that there is anything degrading in the jealousy itself; it is not the savage insatiate offspring of passion; it is only the natural result of the real honest liking, the genuine affectionate sympathy, the warm anxious regard which she has still for the man whom she once loved.

But Miss Grange mistakes it and its

causes, and there comes a gleam of malignant satisfaction at her own power to pain, into her gentle eyes. Her satisfaction is slightly damped, however, by Kate's next words.

"I am rather surprised to hear that my cousin Mr. Forest should have allowed himself to be swayed even in a trifling matter by you; perhaps you have made yourself mistress of some secret which he desires to have kept, by hiding behind a curtain, or peeping through a key-hole, and you hold it over him as a threat. It is just the kind of thing you would do, I should imagine."

Kate speaks with the precision and cold distinctness of intense concentrated contempt. But the woman she addresses is contempt-proof. Miss Grange merely throws her head up, and ripples out a clear, rather loud laugh, that actually shakes her plump person. That there is nothing genuine in the laughter—that it does not take its rise in amusement, or mirthful feeling, or delicately tickled humour, is little to the purpose. She laughs; as if Kate's accusation were so eminently ridiculous a thing that no sensible woman need attempt to refute it.

"How touchy you are about my having heard—quite by accident—the little advances you made to Frank, my dear," she says, saucily; "you've evidently brooded over it, and come to think a great deal of it. Men are so different, Frank never gets in the least annoyed when I laugh at him about it."

The coarse callous hardihood with which Miss Grange can ignore so entirely her own shameful part in the scene to which she makes this irritating reference, is infinitely more bewildering and enraging to Kate, than is the galling allusion to her own share in the transaction. That at least, even if a little over tender, had been true and womanly; whereas Charlotte Grange had been so entirely contemptible, that Kate feels something of humiliation in holding any communion with her, and is silent through sheer amazement.

But Miss Grange, quiet, undisturbed, and calm, takes advantage of Kate's staggered silence at her laughter to say, "I wouldn't bring Frank with me to-day, because my sister-in-law is so fond of prophesying, and it bores me. She declares that Frank Forest is in love with me—as if I cared whether he is or not!"

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